

## Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W  
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O R 031630Z JUN 77  
FM USMISSION USBERLIN  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4690  
AMEMBASSY BONN IMMEDIATE  
INFO AMEMBASSY BERLIN UNN  
AMEMBASSY LONDON  
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW  
AMEMBASSY PARIS  
USMISSION NATO

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 USBERLIN 1507

EXDIS

E O 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PFOR PGOV WB US UR UK FR GW GE  
SUBJ: AMBASSADOR ABRASIMOV'S EVIDENCE ABOUT ALLIED FLAG TOURS

REFS: A. BONN 9233; B. USBERLIN 1368; C. BERLIN 5767; D. USBERLIN  
1023; E. BERLIN 5991; F. USBERLIN 1283; G. USBERLIN 1269; H.  
BONN 8615; I. USBERLIN 1334

SUMMARY: THERE ARE TWO LIKELY INTERPRETATIONS OF AMBASSADOR  
ABRASIMOV'S TREATMENT WITH AMBASSADOR STOESSEL OF THE FLAG  
TOUR PROBLEM ON MAY 30. NEITHER IS PARTICULARLY ALARMING,  
AND ONE IS MUCH Milder THAN THE OTHER. ON THE ONE HAND,  
IT IS POSSIBLE THE SOVIETS WANT TO ESCALATE THE MATTER  
SLIGHTLY BY INTRODUCING IN BERLIN A NEW ARGUMENTATIVE  
ELEMENT OF DOCUMENTATION OF TRAFFIC OFFENSES AND INTELLI-  
GENCE ACTIVITIES. ON THE OTHER HAND, THEIR FIRST ATTEMPT  
AT THIS, ALTHOUGH SWATHED IN STATISTICS, WAS SO WEAK AS  
TO LEAD TO THE SUSPICION THAT IT WAS PRO FORMA. WE SUR-  
MISE THAT, WHILE TRYING TO KEEP THE SUBJECT PROPPED UP TO  
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SATISFY THE GDR, THE SOVIETS ARE NOT PRESENTLY DETERMINED  
TO PUSH THE ISSUE OF DENIAL OF FLAG TOURS TO A CONCLUSION.  
END SUMMARY.

1. THE SOVIET PRESENTATIONS AGAINST ALLIED FLAG  
TOURS IN CAPITALS WERE CLEAR ENOUGH AS TO AIM, BUT WERE  
NOT VERY DETAILED. IN BERLIN THEY WERE NOT PRECEDED BY

ANY SYSTEMATIC EXPRESSION OF SOVIET DISSATISFACTION WITH THE ALLIED PATROL EXERCISE, ALTHOUGH THE SOVIETS NORMALLY COMPLAIN SEVERAL TIMES A YEAR ABOUT PATROL OR ALLIED/SOVIET TRAFFIC OR OTHER IMPROPRIETIES.

2. AS OPPOSED TO THE SPARSE SOVIET DEMARCHES OF APRIL 15 AND THEREAFTER, AMBASSADOR ABRASIMOV DISCUSSED THE MATTER IN CONSIDERABLE DETAIL ON MAY 30 WITH AMBASSADOR STOESSEL (REF A). HE ADDED SEVERAL NEW ELEMENTS, IN THAT HE TREATED THE COMPLAINTS AT LENGTH FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE THE DEMARCHES, ADDED A CERTAIN DIMENSION OF "DOCUMENTATION" IN THE FORM OF STATISTICS AND PHOTOGRAPHS, AND EMPHASIZED THE GDR AS THE SOURCE OF PRESSURE ON THE ISSUE. BUT HE FINALLY SAID WE MUST AGREE TO DISAGREE ON THE SUBJECT. ABRASIMOV'S DOCUMENTATION AND STATISTICS WERE WEAK AND INACCURATE.

3. IT CAN BE ASSUMED THAT THE PRESENTATION, WHICH WAS ASSISTED BY KHOTULEV AND TYUTYUNOV PASSING LISTS AND BOOKLETS OF PHOTOS, WAS INTENDED TO BE A FOLLOW-UP OF THE DEMARCHES AND TO KEEP THE ISSUE ALIVE. WE MAY CALL THIS THE "EVIDENCE APPROACH." BUT THE QUESTION ARISES AS TO HOW SERIOUSLY THE DEMAND FOR STOPPING THE PATROLS IS NOW TO BE TAKEN.

4. TWO POSSIBILITIES ARE THAT THE EVIDENCE APPROACH SIGNALIZES EITHER (A) AN EFFORT TO START A MORE DETAILED AND CONTINUOUS DIALOGUE ON ALLIED TOUR INFRACTIONS, WITH PERHAPS INCREASED EASTERN SURVEILLANCE OR HARASSMENT TO  
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ESTABLISH OR CAUSE TRAFFIC VIOLATIONS OR DOCUMENT INTELLIGENCE ACTIVITIES, OR (B) A PRETEXT TO SATISFY THE GDR THAT THE USSR IS PERSISTENTLY PURSUING THE MATTER.

5. AS POSSIBLE EVIDENCE OF THESIS ONE WE HAVE:

A. FIRST TIME PRESENTATION OF ALLEGATIONS WHICH ARE NUMERICAL ON TOTAL TOURS AND AVERAGE NUMBER OF TOURS PER DAY, PLUS PHOTOS OF ALLEGED TRAFFIC VIOLATIONS AND ALLEGED PHOTOGRAPHIC OR INTELLIGENCE ACTIVITIES.

B. FACT THAT THE MATTER HAS BEEN DIPLOMATICALLY SURFACED IN BERLIN IS A FORM MORE ADVANCED THAN THE DEMARCHES IN CAPITALS.

AGAINST THIS, FOR THESIS TWO WE HAVE THE FOLLOWING:

A. THE DOCUMENTATION WAS DECIDEDLY WEAK, AS THE FIGURES FOR TOTAL TOURS WERE COMPLETELY INACCURATE.

B. THE "TRAFFIC VIOLATION" FIGURES OF 600 FOR THE FIRST FOUR MONTHS WERE OBVIOUSLY INVENTED. OUR TOTAL NUMBER OF KNOWN INCIDENTS OF EVERY TYPE BY THE THE THREE ALLIES IN 1976 WAS 75 (26 US, 27 BRITISH, 22 FRENCH), REF. AMBASSADOR STOESSEL FOCUSED ON THIS BLUNDER, WHILE DENYING THE VALIDITY OF ALL THEIR SATISTICS.

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O R 031630Z JUN 77  
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INFO AMEMBASSY BERLIN  
AMEMBASSY LONDON  
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW  
AMEMBASSY PARIS  
USMISSION NATO

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EXDIS

C. THE ONLY FORMAL LIST OF TRAFFIC INFRACTIONS TURNED OVER TO US (TO BACK UP AN ALLEGATION OF 600) CONTAINED ONLY 14 INCIDENTS FROM 1977, AND ONE FROM AUGUST 1976, OF WHICH 5 WERE US; 7 BRITISH, AND 3 FRENCH. ALMOST ALL THE INCIDENTS ARE SO TRIVIAL AND SO LONG IN THE PAST THAT THE US DRIVERS CANNOT RECALL ANY CIRCUMSTANCES RELATED THERETO. THE SIX PHOTOS OF INFRACTIONS WERE MOSTLY INCOMPREHENSIBLE AS SUCH, E.G. SHOWING ALLEGEDLY IMPROPER TURNS WHEN THE CARS WERE NOT EVEN TURNING. IN ANY EVENT THEY ONLY COVERED ONE VEHICLE OF EACH POWER.

D. THE SOVIET DOCUMENTATION REVEALS A SIGNIFICANT, IF NOT TOTAL, LACK OF COORDINATION WITH THE GDR ON THE OBSERVATION OF PATROLS. THE ONLY TWO GDR COMPLAINTS (NIGERIAN MOTORCADE INCIDENT, APRIL 14, REFS C AND D; STOLEN FLAGS IN MARCH, REFS E AND F) TO OUR EMBASSY WERE NOT INCLUDED IN THE SOVIET LOT. IT LOOKS LIKE THE ALLEGED UK VEHICLE (WITH NO NUMBER) LISTED BY THE SOVIETS IN ITEM

12 AT 0920 ON APRIL 15 COULD HAVE BEEN THE USCOB CAR

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REPORTED IN THE NIGERIAN MOTORCADE AT 1050 ON APRIL 14,  
BUT THE SOVIET "DOCUMENTATION" IS TOO SLOPPY TO MAKE US  
CERTAIN.

E. ABRASIMOV FINALLY ADMITTED THAT EACH SIDE WOULD HAVE  
TO AGREE TO DISAGREE ON THIS ISSUE. HE HAD EARLIER EX-  
PLAINED THAT THE GDR WAS PRESSING THE SOVIETS TO STOP THE  
PATROLS.

6. THE DEPARTMENT WILL RECALL THAT TWO HIGH SOVIET SOURCES  
(COL. GENERAL GRINKEVICH, COS OF THE GSFG, AND AMBASSADOR  
FALIN) HAVE RECENTLY DESCRIBED TO THE ALLIES HOW THE SOVIETS  
WILL RESPOND TO ALLIED NON-COMPLIANCE WITH THE REQUEST TO  
STOP FLAG TOURS, I.E., THEY WILL INCREASE THE VISITS OF  
THEIR OWN TROOPS TO THE WSB (REFS G AND H). ( COMMENT: SO  
FAR THIS HAS NOT HAPPENED. END COMMENT). IT IS OF INTEREST  
THAT ABRASIMOV DID NOT REPEAT THIS STATEMENT. NOR INDEED  
DID HE MAKE REFERENCES OF ANY KIND AS TO CONSEQUENCES  
OF ALLIED REFUSAL TO PHASE OUT THE EXERCISE.

7. IT IS DIFFICULT TO ASSESS ABRASIMOV'S AMBIGUOUS  
PERFORMANCE, BUT WE SUPPOSE THAT ITS VERY AMBIGUITY AND  
ABSENCE OF HARD EDGES ARE IN THEMSELVES INDICATORS. SIG-  
NIFICANTLY, HE DID NOT EVEN ASK THAT THE OFFENDING DRIVERS  
OF THE FEW IDENTIFIED VEHICLES BE DISCIPLINED (AN INVARI-  
ABLE ELEMENT IN NORMAL SOVIET COMPLAINTS ON THIS SUBJECT).  
NOR DID HE RESPOND TO AMBASSADOR STOESSEL'S SUGGESTION  
THAT SUCH DETAILS COULD BE LEFT TO SUBORDINATE OFFICERS  
FOR DISCUSSION.

8. HIS LENGTHY BUT DIFFUSE APPROACH IS CONSISTENT WITH  
THE INTERPRETATION THAT IT WAS INTENDED AS A PRO FORMA  
EXERCISE TO SATISFY THE GDR THAT THE SOVIET UNION IS CON-  
TINUING TO PUSH THE MATTER. VIS-A-VIS THE ALLIES IT  
SERVES TO KEEP THE MATTER ACTIVE, WITHOUT FORECLOSING  
ANY OPTIONS. IF THE SOVIETS ARE ABOUT TO HEAT THE ISSUE

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UP LOCALLY, THEN ABRASIMOV'S MILD TREATMENT WAS DESIGNED  
TO OBSCURE RATHER THAN SIGNAL THE INTENTION. BUT PER SE  
THE PERFORMANCE DOES NOT GIVE ANY INDICATION OF TIMING.  
THE SOVIETS COULD BEGIN TO CRACK DOWN NEXT WEEK, OR HOLD  
OFF INDEFINITELY PENDING LARGER DEVELOPMENTS IN EAST/WEST

RELATIONS.

9. FACT REMAINS THAT SOVIETS MAY NOW BEGIN TO EMPHASIZE FIGURES AND DOCUMENTATION, EVEN TO THE POINT OF PRESENTING FICTITIOUS STATISTICS. WE CONSIDER IT INCREDIBLE THAT THEY DO NOT HAVE PRECISE TABULATIONS OF OUR FLAG TOUR VEHICLES, BECAUSE THE LATTER HAVE A UNIQUE AND READILY IDENTIFICABLE CONFIGURATION.

10. SHOULD THE RUSSIANS COME BACK TO US AT A LOWER LEVEL WITH THE EVIDENCE APPROACH, WE WOULD PLAN ESSENTIALLY TO FOLLOW AMBASSADOR STOESSEL'S STRATEGY OF MAY 30, I.E., WE WOULD DENY THE VALIDITY OF INFLATED FIGURES FIRMLY BUT IN A GENERAL WAY, WITHOUT ADVANCING SPECIFIC STATISTICS OF OUR OWN (EXCEPT WITH REFERENCE TO ALLEGED TRAFFIC VIOLATIONS). THERE IS NO POINT AT THIS STAGE IN OFFERING THE SOVIETS THE GIFT OF A PRECISE BREAKDOWN OF ALLIED FLAG TOURS (ALTHOUGH THE INFORMATION IS NOT SO SENSITIVE PER SE THAT ITS REVELATION NEED BE RULED OUT OF CONSIDERATION BY THE DEPARTMENT AND DOD IN SOME FUTURE CONTEXT).

11. IN ANY GENERALIZED DISCUSSION WE HAVE THE CONTINUING ANOMALY THAT THE BRITISH AND FRENCH FLAG TOURS ARE INTELLIGENCE ORIENTED AND HAVE BEEN MORE AGGRESSIVE THAN OUR OWN, BUT RECENTLY MORE CIRCUMSPECT. (ALTHOUGH ABOUT ONE-HALF OUR NUMBER, BRITISH AND FRENCH CARS HAD ABOUT TWICE AS MANY INCIDENTS LAST YEAR.) THEY ARE NOW MORE RESTRAINED. WE WOULD THEREFORE REFER ANY SOVIET COMPLAINT ABOUT CARS OF OTHER ALLIES TO THE BRITISH AND FRENCH. GEORGE

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## Message Attributes

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